

Guide for the Preparation for Worship on 5 November 2023

AM Worship

Call to Worship: Psalm 98:1-3

Opening Hymn: 220 Give Praise to God

Confession of Sin

Most holy and merciful Father; We acknowledge and confess before You; Our sinful nature prone to evil and slothful in good; And all our shortcomings and offenses. You alone know how often we have sinned; In wandering from Your ways; In wasting Your gifts; In forgetting Your love. But You, O Lord, have pity upon us; Who are ashamed and sorry for all wherein we have displeased You. Teach us to hate our errors; Cleanse us from our secret faults; And forgive our sins for the sake of Your dear Son. And O most holy and loving Father; Help us we beseech You; To live in Your light and walk in Your ways; According to the commandments of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Hebrews 2:17-18

Hymn of Preparation: 79B Remember Not, O God

Old Covenant Reading: Jonah 1:17-2:10

New Covenant Reading: Matthew 12:38-45

Sermon: *Only the Sign of Jonah*

Hymn of Response: 176 O Thou That Hear'st When Sinners Cry

Confession of Faith: Q/A 1 Heidelberg Catechism (p. 872)

Doxology (Hymn 568)

Closing Hymn: 416 Your Hand, O God, Has Guided

PM Worship

415 We Gather Together

134 Come, Bless the LORD with One Accord

475 Who Trusts in God, a Strong Abode

OT: 1 Kings 20:13-30

NT: Romans 9:14-29

Sermon: *Amazing Grace for Israel and Ahab*

Adult Sunday School: Heidelberg Catechism – Lord's Day 21, Part II

Q 54. What do you believe concerning “the holy catholic church”?

A. I believe that the Son of God
through his Spirit and Word,
out of the entire human race,
from the beginning of the world to its end,
gathers, protects, and preserves for himself
a community chosen for eternal life
and united in true faith.
And of this community I am and always will be
a living member.

**Q 55. What do you understand by
“the communion of saints”?**

A. First, that believers one and all,
as members of Christ the Lord,
have communion with him
and share in all his treasures and gifts.
Second, that each member
should consider it a duty
to use these gifts
readily and joyfully
for the service and enrichment
of the other members.

**Q 56. What do you believe
concerning “the forgiveness of sins”?**

A. I believe that God,
because of Christ’s satisfaction,
will no longer remember
any of my sins
or my sinful nature
which I need to struggle against all my life.
Rather, by his grace
God grants me the righteousness of Christ
that I may never come into judgment.

Suggested Preparations

Monday (10/29) Read and discuss Matthew 12:38-45

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.” But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

“When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.” (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

What is “the sign of Jonah the prophet?” Jewish literature in the Second Temple Period paid a fair amount of attention to the prophet Jonah. According to Chow’s survey, amidst the variety of discussion and focus upon the narrative in the book of Jonah, “Jewish writers in the first century and earlier tend to focus on Jonah’s miraculous saving from the belly of the fish.” Jesus Himself gives an explicit but shorthand description for what the sign of Jonah will be in His own ministry: “For just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea monster for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.”

Strictly speaking, the comparable sign in Jesus’ ministry will be the fact that, just as Jonah spent this time in the sea monster’s belly, Jesus will spend this time in the heart of the earth. However, it is obvious in the book of Jonah that the greatest significance of the “three days and three nights” is that after Jonah spent this time in the fish’s belly, *he then came out again to new life on the dry land*. In other words, the prophet spent only three days and three nights confined in his burial at sea. Even so, Jesus here predicts in somewhat cryptic fashion that He will spend three days’ time in the heart of the earth – but *only* three days’ time. Then He will exit to new life!

The sign of Jonah the prophet, then, is Jesus’ resurrection. To be sure, the death of Christ and His temporary interment are part of the larger complex of the sign of Jonah, for the life, swallowing up, and reemergence of both Jonah and Jesus are naturally (and supernaturally!) aspects of God’s same great deed of using death and burial as precursors to resurrection life. Yet Jesus’ words do not dwell upon either the fact of His upcoming death or its significance, but upon the fact that He will not stay dead and will rise.

Read or sing Hymn 220 Give Praise to God

Tuesday (10/30) Read and discuss Matthew 12:22-37

Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?” But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.” Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be

forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (ESV)

To the Pharisees, Jesus offers the sharpest of rebukes and a terrifying warning that they are on the brink of committing the unforgiveable sin. Yet, Jesus also has a word for the crowds:

Whoever is not with Me is against me, and whoever does not gather with Me scatters.

It would have been easy for those in the crowds to agree with Jesus that the Pharisees were way out of line but then to wrongly imagine that they were in good shape so long as they continued to be nice and respectfully towards Jesus.

Many of our neighbors feel and act this way towards Jesus. As long as they are not attacking Jesus, they don't imagine any reason why the Living God would be upset with them. If you are ever tempted to think like this, please remind yourself of our Lord's words: Jesus says that anything short of committing yourself to trusting and following Him means that you are His enemy. “Anything short of committing yourself to trusting and following Jesus means that you are His enemy.” Isn't that what Jesus is saying:

Whoever is not with Me is against me, and whoever does not gather with Me scatters.

Now that the King has come every single one of us needs to repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand!

Read or Psalm 79B Remember Not, O God

Wednesday (11/1) Read and discuss Jonah 1:17-2:10

And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, [2] saying,

“I called out to the LORD, out of my distress,
and he answered me;
out of the belly of Sheol I cried,
and you heard my voice.

For you cast me into the deep,
 into the heart of the seas,
 and the flood surrounded me;
 all your waves and your billows
 passed over me.
 Then I said, 'I am driven away
 from your sight;
 yet I shall again look
 upon your holy temple.'
 The waters closed in over me to take my life;
 the deep surrounded me;
 weeds were wrapped about my head
 at the roots of the mountains.
 I went down to the land
 whose bars closed upon me forever;
 yet you brought up my life from the pit,
 O LORD my God.
 When my life was fainting away,
 I remembered the LORD,
 and my prayer came to you,
 into your holy temple.
 Those who pay regard to vain idols
 forsake their hope of steadfast love.
 But I with the voice of thanksgiving
 will sacrifice to you;
 what I have vowed I will pay.
 Salvation belongs to the LORD!"

And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land. (ESV)

Doug Stuart writes:

God is sovereign in this chapter, as elsewhere in the book. He designates the fish. He effects by it the rescue celebrated in the psalm Jonah prays. He tells the fish to put Jonah ashore. Neither Jonah nor the fish had any control over events. And God has used His sovereignty to rescue a disobedient prophet! He will accomplish what He intends and His intention, it is becoming clear, is that Jonah should be taught a lesson about grace. If Jonah himself experienced deliverance from a deserved death, maybe then he will have some ability to commiserate with the citizens of the city and nation to whom he has been called to preach.

This chapter is, in a way, the happiest part of the story. Full of rescue and thanksgiving, miracle and praise, it allows Jonah to see that God's determination to do good can mercifully benefit even those who deserve punishment. Consider only what the hearer/reader knows about the story so far, this time without reference to

the remainder of the events as described in chaps. 3 and 4. Jonah has tried to disobey Yahweh's word and yet has failed to get away from it. He has been committed to death yet has survived it. He was in an impossible predicament and has been rescued by completely unexpected, serendipitous means. Will not good now come? Will not the story end happily, with an obedient prophet, grateful to God for sparing his own life, preaching faithfully to Nineveh as it should have been all along? The story so far allows for just such an ending, and therefore the actual (contrary) ending is effectively heightened. Jonah's stubborn resentment expressed in chapter 4 is all the more a warning to the audience not to do likewise. As a parable highlights by contrast an attitude or a practice so that the hearer, if he too shares that attitude or practice, is caught short by it, so Jonah's situation does the same for the audience. He had every reason to empathize with Nineveh now. That he would later fail to be concerned for their situation is its own indictment on his stubborn, narrow nationalism.

Sing or Read Hymn 176 O Thou That Hear'st When Sinners Cry

Thursday (11/2) Read and discuss Romans 9:14-29

What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory—even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hosea,

"Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,'
and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'"

"And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,'
there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay." And as Isaiah predicted,

"If the Lord of hosts had not left us offspring,

we would have been like Sodom
and become like Gomorrah.” (ESV)

R.C. Sproul writes:

God’s sovereignty in election is revealed so “that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory (v. 23).” The treasure of God’s glory is likened to riches untold, riches that can never be counted. That is what the doctrine of election is about. We must never study the doctrine of predestination in the abstract. In the final analysis, although predestination certainly involves God’s sovereignty – his omnipotence and omniscience – the doctrine is about the riches of God’s glory. Paul cannot rehearse these things without breaking out into doxology: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” (11:33a). I initially struggled to embrace the doctrine of election, but contemplating the riches of God’s glory enables me to see the sweetness of this doctrine. It screams not so much sovereignty as unfathomable grace and mercy.

This doctrine more than any other reveals that grace really is amazing. “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I am found” – we sing that hymn not because we were searching but because the hound of heaven found us with the sweetness of his mercy and grace. That is why we talk about doctrines such as justification and election as the doctrines of grace. Grace is the idea here in the text we are considering. From a corrupt mass of clay God chose to make vessels of glory. If you are in Christ Jesus, that is what God has done for you in his mercy and grace. He has made you a vessel of mercy that he prepared before the foundation of the world for glory.

Friday (11/3) Read and discuss 1 Kings 20:13-30

And behold, a prophet came near to Ahab king of Israel and said, “Thus says the LORD, Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will give it into your hand this day, and you shall know that I am the LORD.” And Ahab said, “By whom?” He said, “Thus says the LORD, By the servants of the governors of the districts.” Then he said, “Who shall begin the battle?” He answered, “You.” Then he mustered the servants of the governors of the districts, and they were 232. And after them he mustered all the people of Israel, seven thousand.

And they went out at noon, while Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the booths, he and the thirty-two kings who helped him. The servants of the governors of the districts went out first. And Ben-hadad sent out scouts, and they reported to him, “Men are coming out from Samaria.” He said, “If they have come out for peace, take them alive. Or if they have come out for war, take them alive.”

So these went out of the city, the servants of the governors of the districts and the army that followed them. And each struck down his man. The Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them, but Ben-hadad king of Syria escaped on a horse with horsemen. And the king of Israel went out and struck the horses and chariots, and struck the Syrians with a great blow.

Then the prophet came near to the king of Israel and said to him, “Come, strengthen yourself, and consider well what you have to do, for in the spring the king of Syria will come up against you.”

And the servants of the king of Syria said to him, “Their gods are gods of the hills, and so they were stronger than we. But let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. And do this: remove the kings, each from his post, and put commanders in their places, and muster an army like the army that you have lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot. Then we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.” And he listened to their voice and did so.

In the spring, Ben-hadad mustered the Syrians and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. And the people of Israel were mustered and were provisioned and went against them. The people of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of goats, but the Syrians filled the country. And a man of God came near and said to the king of Israel, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Because the Syrians have said, “The LORD is a god of the hills but he is not a god of the valleys,” therefore I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.’” And they encamped opposite one another seven days. Then on the seventh day the battle was joined. And the people of Israel struck down of the Syrians 100,000 foot soldiers in one day. And the rest fled into the city of Aphek, and the wall fell upon 27,000 men who were left.

Ben-hadad also fled and entered an inner chamber in the city. (ESV)

Walter Maier writes:

As the Arameans are getting ready to resume the attack on Samaria, Yahweh has one of His true prophets approach Ahab and tell him that Yahweh that very day would give total victory to Ahab and the Israelites over the enormous Aramean army. This was an absolutely stunning announcement, coming as it did in the face of Israelite weakness and seeming Aramean invincibility. Yet what appeared impossible with men was entirely possible with almighty Yahweh. He went on record ahead of time, foretelling what would happen, and then brought about the fulfillment of His word. Therefore, no god could be compared to Yahweh. Conspicuous by its absence is any reference to Baal throughout 1 Kings 20, who could do and did absolutely nothing for the Israelites. Yahweh was indeed “the God.”

That Yahweh would miraculously deliver Ahab and the Israelites from the dire Aramean threat was due simply to His grace, mercy, and love. These attributes of Yahweh would be on display when He exercised His

omnipotence on behalf of his covenant people. He would show Himself to be the faithful covenant God, Yahweh: “and you will know that I am Yahweh” (20:13, 28). This God had acted for Israel in the past, freeing them from Egyptian bondage, causing them to walk through the sea on dry ground, giving to them the Promised Land, and since then rescuing them from various enemies.

Yahweh, in granting Ahab and the Israelites two great victories and saving them from the Arameans, was calling them back to Himself and the covenant. He was reinforcing the message given and the same call issued with the Mount Carmel event, which took place not long before the events of 1 Kings 20. Yahweh continued in His attempt to draw the people both from Baalism and the perverted Yahwism of Jeroboam to a position of covenant loyalty and true worship. God wanted their sincere confession of and their remorse for their covenant unfaithfulness, and He wanted them to grasp His Word (proclaimed and recorded by Moses and the other prophets), through which they would be spiritually restored. Thus converted, they would hold in faith to the Messiah, the God-man promised in Scripture, and the fundamental reason for God’s covenant with Israel, from whom the Savior according to His human nature, would come.

Read or sing Hymn 416 Your Hand, O God, Has Guided

Saturday (10/28) Read and discuss Matthew 12:38-45

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.” But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

“When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.” (ESV)

Jeffrey Gibbs writes:

In a brief paragraph that sums up this brutal confrontation with these Galilean Pharisees (12:22-45), Jesus offers a little illustration about what

can happen when a demon is cast out of a man if his house is not then occupied by the Spirit of God. Jesus is not trying to satisfy the curious by teaching about demonology or the inner workings of demonic possession. He intends, rather, to warn His contemporaries who have rejected Him. Furthermore, we may suppose that Matthew intends Jesus' words to apply to any and all who read this Gospel with hearts that stubbornly reject the claims of Jesus. Jesus has done his miracles in Israel, far and wide. He has healed the sick, stilled the storm, and cast out demons. Unless people repent, however, and embrace and follow Jesus as the Christ empowered by the Spirit of God, their final spiritual condition will be far worse than it had been before.

Prayer: Please lift up tomorrow's morning and evening worship services.